

Opening Statement of Catherine M. Croft to the House of Representatives
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and
Committee on Oversight and Reform

October 30, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my statement today.

For the last nine years, it has been my honor to serve my country as a Foreign Service Officer. In that capacity, it has been a privilege to serve alongside colleagues of intelligence, integrity, and determination to advance U.S. interests, some of whom have already spoken to this committee. I am not sure that I have anything to add to the testimony of those who have come before me, but I will answer your questions to the best of my ability.

My work on Ukraine started in 2013, when I was posted to the U.S. Mission to NATO. My portfolio included NATO-Ukraine relations when the citizens of Ukraine took to the streets to demand a European future and an end to corruption. When Russian tanks rolled into Crimea, I was assigned to NATO headquarters in Brussels. At the time, we did not know where those tanks would stop. Russia's aggression in Ukraine posed, and continues to pose, a real and immediate threat to our national interest in a Europe free, whole, and at peace.

My firm belief in the importance of Ukraine's future to U.S. national interests led me to the Ukraine Desk. From August 2015 to July 2017, I was one of several Ukraine Desk Officers at State Department headquarters. In my portfolio, I focused on security assistance, arms sales, and defense reform. But like all desk officers, my work also included supporting efforts to combat corruption in Ukraine and holding leadership accountable for a lack of high-level prosecutions.

In July 2017, as the Trump Administration was considering overturning the ban on providing Ukraine defensive weapons, I was asked to join the National

Security Council Staff at the White House. As the Director covering Ukraine, I staffed the President’s December 2017 decision to provide Ukraine with Javelin anti-tank missile systems. I also staffed his September 2017 meeting with then-President Poroshenko on the margins of the UN General Assembly. Throughout both, I heard—directly and indirectly—President Trump describe Ukraine as a corrupt country.

During my time at the NSC, I received multiple calls from lobbyist Robert Livingston, who told me that Ambassador Yovanovitch should be fired. He characterized Ambassador Yovanovitch as an “Obama holdover” and associated with George Soros. It was not clear to me at the time—or now—at whose direction or at whose expense Mr. Livingston was seeking the removal of Ambassador Yovanovitch. I documented these calls and told my boss, Fiona Hill, and George Kent, who was in Kyiv at the time. I am not aware of any action that was taken in response.

I left the NSC in July 2018 and started studying Arabic at the Foreign Service Institute in preparation for a tour in Baghdad. That plan was cut short in May 2019, when I was asked to take over as Ambassador Volker’s Advisor. I spent the month of June embedded in our Embassy in Kyiv to prepare and then spent the week of July 8 overlapping with my predecessor, Christopher Anderson. That week was the first time I became aware that Ambassador Volker was in touch with Rudolph Giuliani. However, Ambassador Volker’s conversations with Giuliani were separate from my work, and I was generally unaware of when they spoke or what they spoke about. I have never had contact with Rudolph Giuliani.

On July 18, I participated in a sub-Policy Coordination Committee video conference where an OMB representative reported that the White House Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney, had placed an informal hold on security assistance to Ukraine. The only reason given was that the order came at the direction of the

President. I had heard about the hold before that date, but do not remember the specific date.

During the July 25 phone call between President Trump and President Zelenskyy, I was traveling with Ambassador Volker in Kyiv. I did not listen in on the call. I accompanied Ambassador Volker in meetings with Ukrainian officials and to the Line of Contact between Ukrainian armed forces and the Russia-led forces in eastern Ukraine. The only readout I got of July 25 call was based on what President Zelenskyy told Ambassadors Volker, Taylor, and Sondland about the call at a meeting on July 26. The focus of the call, as I understood it, was to schedule a face-to-face meeting between President Trump and President Zelenskyy. We hoped that such a meeting would help undo President Trump's long-held view of Ukraine as a corrupt country.

Since July, my sole focus has been supporting efforts to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Zelenskyy's election and his mandate to tackle corruption ignited new energy into stalled talks. Right now, even as Ukrainians face casualties nearly every day in defense of their own territory against Russian aggression, the sides are making progress disengaging at key crossing points. Zelenskyy has shown a willingness to take political risk to bring Russia back to the table. His best chance at success is with our support along with our European partners. It is my hope that even as this Committee's process plays out, we do not lose sight of what is happening in Ukraine and its great promise as a prosperous and democratic member of the European community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak, and I welcome your questions.

Opening Statement of Christopher J. Anderson to the House of Representatives
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and
Committee on Oversight and Reform

October 30, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement today. I have served as a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department since 2005. I have spent most of my career serving in countries on the periphery of the Russian Federation including Mongolia, Armenia, and, most recently, Ukraine. For the last five years, I have worked in Kyiv and Washington to advance our national security interests by promoting a peaceful resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, countering Russian aggression, and defending the principles that international borders should not be changed by force. It has been a privilege to serve our country and promote our national interests on such an important foreign policy issue while working alongside dedicated and talented public servants. These efforts have benefited from strong bipartisan support.

My work in Ukraine began with a three-week temporary duty to Kyiv in March 2014 just after Russia invaded and occupied Crimea. I returned to Kyiv in September 2014 to serve as the External Unit Chief in the Political Section of our Embassy. I served in Kyiv from 2014–2017 and worked closely with Ambassador Yovanovitch from 2015–2017.

In August 2017 Ambassador Volker asked me to serve as Special Advisor for Ukraine Negotiations. I served in this position from late August 2017 until July 12, 2019. In this role, I helped develop negotiating positions, analyzed Russian and Ukrainian ceasefire proposals, and provided context on the history of the conflict and past negotiations. I also traveled with Ambassador Volker to the front

lines of the conflict, to negotiate with the Russians, and to meet with European counterparts.

On November 25, 2018, Russia escalated the conflict further when its forces openly attacked and seized Ukrainian military vessels heading to a Ukrainian port in the Sea of Azov. While my colleagues at the State Department quickly prepared a statement condemning Russia for its escalation, senior officials in the White House blocked it from being issued. Ambassador Volker drafted a tweet condemning Russia's actions, which I posted to his account.

In December 2018, Ambassador Volker and I traveled to Brussels to meet with EU officials and key NATO Allies to push for a more assertive European response to Russia's escalation. During this visit, we met with Ambassador Sondland, who hosted a lunch bringing together key EU officials for a discussion on coordinating our response to Russia's escalation.

When Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected president in April, Ambassador Volker and I were hopeful that a newly empowered Ukrainian president could reinitiate high-level U.S. engagement. Before the inauguration in May, my colleagues and I saw a tweet by Rudolph Giuliani alleging that President-elect Zelenskyy was surrounded by enemies of President Trump. In an effort to counter the negative narrative sparked by Ambassador Yovanovitch's withdrawal and Giuliani's statements, we pushed for a high-level delegation to attend Zelenskyy's inauguration. Secretary Perry, Ambassador Sondland, Ambassador Volker, NSC Director Alexander Vindman, and Senator Ron Johnson, traveled to Kyiv as part of a Presidential delegation for the inauguration.

After the delegation returned, the participants wanted to brief the President on the trip. Ambassador Sondland was able to quickly arrange a meeting with the President for May 23. I participated in the preparatory meeting at the White House

in which we discussed key deliverables that would demonstrate President Zelenskyy's commitment to reform. We focused on three key areas: 1) demonstrating Zelenskyy's independence from powerful vested interests and pursuing anticorruption reform as well as antitrust reform; 2) strengthening U.S.-Ukrainian energy cooperation; and 3) improving our bilateral security relationship which included Ukraine increasing its purchases of key U.S. military equipment.

Ambassador Volker told me after the meeting that the President had agreed to invite President Zelenskyy to the White House for a meeting and would issue a letter shortly. The President signed a letter on May 29 that included an invitation for President Zelenskyy, but the letter did not include a specific date for the visit.

On June 13, I accompanied Ambassador Volker to a meeting with National Security Advisor John Bolton. In that meeting, Bolton stated that he agreed with our three lines of effort and that he also supported increased senior White House engagement. However, he cautioned that Mr. Giuliani was a key voice with the President on Ukraine which could be an obstacle to increased White House engagement. He did suggest that perhaps the Vice President would be available to travel to Toronto to meet with President Zelenskyy in early July at the Ukraine Reform Conference that the Canadian government was hosting. We later learned that the Vice President would not attend the conference. The morning after the meeting, I sent a brief message to Deputy Assistant Secretary George Kent summarizing the meeting and relaying NSA Bolton's message about Mr. Giuliani. I sent around a more formal summary later that day to my State Department colleagues.

On June 18, Secretary Perry hosted a follow-up meeting at the Department of Energy to discuss how to move forward on these three key areas. In preparation for that meeting, colleagues in different offices in the State Department, the

Department of Energy, and our missions in Kyiv and Brussels worked to develop a joint list of policy outcomes that would demonstrate Zelenskyy's commitment to reform and improve the bilateral U.S.-Ukraine relationship.

In the meeting at the Department of Energy on June 18, there was broad agreement on the interagency framework regarding policy deliverables. There were some initial discussions about how to delineate the lines of effort among the Department of Energy, the State Department, Ambassador Volker, Ambassador Sondland, and Ambassador Taylor (who joined by phone from Kyiv). There was also general agreement that it would be important to schedule a White House visit quickly, even if the actual date of the visit was after the Ukrainian parliamentary elections. There were some vague discussions in the meeting about how to address Mr. Giuliani's continued calls for a corruption investigation. After the meeting I spoke with Ambassador Taylor in a phone call to discuss the atmospherics of the meeting and next steps. We agreed on the importance of not calling for any specific investigations, but otherwise agreed the three lines of effort were useful.

Ambassador Volker then led a delegation to the Ukraine Reform Conference in Toronto July 1–2. We met with several Ukrainian officials including President Zelenskyy. In the meeting, President Zelenskyy highlighted progress in some of the key areas we had identified and pushed for a date for a White House visit. Volker urged him to schedule a call with President Trump in order to start building a relationship and thereby increase the chance of securing a date for the White House visit.

I was scheduled to complete my assignment as Special Advisor for Ukraine Negotiations on July 12, 2019. In the few remaining days of my assignment, I continued to push my Ukrainian counterparts for concrete progress in key reform areas. The Ukrainians remained focused on scheduling a White House visit—

seeing such a visit as a critical step in empowering Zelenskyy in his negotiations with the Russians. My last day with Ambassador Volker was July 12. Catherine Croft was my successor.

In closing, I want to reiterate that my colleagues and I in the Foreign Service are non-partisan and advance the foreign policy set by our duly elected leaders. I take that commitment as well as my oath to defend the Constitution seriously. Working abroad to advance the interest of the United States has at times led to harassment and intimidation by hostile intelligence services, death threats, and other significant challenges for my family and I. I have accepted these burdens because I believe we are advancing a cause greater than ourselves and are working to promote the general welfare.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this statement, and I welcome your questions.